# To Whom It May Concern:

In 2016, I watched my neighborhood, Sherman Park, go up in flames. The unrest was due to the growing amount of fear and frustration this neighborhood had as it watched jobs leave, families leave, and community be destroyed. Martin Luther King once said that "Riots are the voices of those who feel unheard" and in that moment on August 13,2016, the voices of that neighborhood were finally heard. And a community came together and through those ashes rose up like a phoenix and stood together to face an uncertain future.

One of the leaders in this is a man by the name is Vaun Mayes. He and his partner Gabby started a group called Program the Parks. And in almost two years they have been able to build a outdoor community resource for children and their families. They have raised funds to rent a building for the winter months, and through their programming have given kids an outlet to learn and grow.

I first met Vaun when he attended a mass liberation community meeting that I planned to discuss how to make changes to the criminal justice system here in Milwaukee County. Vaun was always willing to share his experiences with me and the group and had some AMAZING ideas about how to help change the incarceration systems here in Milwaukee. He has always supported my work in the community and I can only hope that we will be able to continue our work together.

I say all of these things first to let you know what type of man Vaun is. While his neighborhood was on fire, he spent time on the streets, helping to get people to safety, he was part of the effort to get people off the streets. I know this mans heart and this is what makes it truly difficult to even have to bring this to the forefront and ask you all to help my fellow advocate, activist and friend.

Vaun and I along with Gabby have fought many battles together for the inner city of Milwaukee. When there was a threat to St Joseph, he was right there helping the coalition get the information to the people and helping folks understand the true implications of what would happen if there was no St. Joes.

I have been in Vaun's presence when he has help calm down upset teens that attend his day center. I've watched him participate in forums and discussions as it relates to the impact that policy will have on his youth that he tirelessly works with, and have been able to watch him give a neighborhood hope. If someone were to ask me who I would take with me when times are rough, I would call Vaun's name first. Not only is he a great and amazing advocate and organizer, he is a great friend and confidant.

If you talk to most people who have worked with Vaun, just like me, will have nothing but amazing things to say. And that his community needs him. So my ask is this. Please take a

whole look at this member of my community, because he has done so much and has so much more work to do.

Thank you,

Davette Baker Southern Director Women's March WI Re.Support of Vaun Mayes

To whom it may concern,

This missive is submitted as a testimony to my respect and regard for the character of Vaun Mayes. As a community advocate, retired public school administrator, and former public health based violence prevention specialist, I have been blessed to engage with Mr. Mayes in a variety of spaces. So as he approaches an upcoming federal court hearing, I would be remiss not to share my informed perspective on his immense value to our community and to the entire city of Milwaukee.

Without exaggeration I definitively state that Vaun Mayes is one of the most committed, consistent, and results oriented community activists and servants that Milwaukee's black community has ever known. In the tradition of some of the finest progressive black activists and organizations in our nation's history, over the past 10 years I have witnessed his immense impact in the areas of youth advocacy, youth socialization, family stabilization, gun violence prevention, and domestic violence conflict resolution. In each of these spaces, Mr. Mayes has always conducted himself with a high level of professionalism and diligence and has proven himself to be adept at working peacefully and collaboratively with diverse groups. He possesses an unwavering commitment to serving populations that are the most oppressed and underserved and utilizes his immense popularity and social networking platform to cultivate and facilitate righteous, solution oriented agency on behalf of "the least of these". In addition, Mr.Mayes has performed this high volume of community service in a remarkably unselfish fashion as he is rarely compensated for his efforts in a manner commensurate with his high value and effectiveness as a change agent.

Many in our community would agree that the loss of Vaun Mayes for serving this city would come at great cost. He has become a passionate, uncompromising staple in the lives of the people of Milwaukee's community who long for individuals who are authentic in their willingness to sacrifice perpetually on behalf of others. My sincerest prayer is that Mr. Mayes is granted a healthy opportunity beyond this hearing to fulfill his noble charge and destiny.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or need for elaboration at (414) 828-2006 or <a href="mailto:babarogers8@gmail.com">babarogers8@gmail.com</a>

Respectfully,

Derrick D.Rogers
Founder, Compassion Ministries of Milwaukee
Retired, Milwaukee Public Schools administrator

March 31, 2022

Dear Judge,

I am writing this letter of character for Vaun L. Mayes. Approximately 5 years ago, becoming more frustrated with things that were occurring in Milwaukee, WI, I searched on line for people within the community who took an active role to help prevent violence. I found Vaun Mayes on facebook and continued to follow him on line for a year, learning he was a community activist, before meeting him in person.

Trusting people I meet on line doesn't come easy for me, but I soon learned of Vaun's kindness and integrity. He spearheads a "gift drive" for children and families each year. He collects donations, shops, and with a team of volunteers, delivers gifts door to door during the holiday season. It's important for him record his shopping, with receipts, to his on line followers. Two years ago I took him shopping and the past year was a member of his planning committee. Vaun also ends up purchasing gifts with his own money. Throughout the year, he never asks for money for personal use, it is always used for someone in crisis. He records the money exchanges on facebook associated with these interactions.

Vaun works with many city agencies and groups doing things from improving the park basketball courts to handing out free food to those in need. You can often find him at the court house working with city officials to address crime and violence in the city. You can also find him working with the Office of Violence Prevention responding to Domestic Violence calls and at press conferences and vigils for homicide victims.

I was quite surprised to learn of the pending charges against Vaun. His character speaks to me as a man that supports youth and adults in caring, non-violent manner. He showcases youth who are successful with big and small accomplishments. He works with youth to avoid troubles with the law. He also holds people accountable for their behaviors and teaches/role-models appropriate ways to cope with their problems.

I consider Vaun one of the most sensitive, yet strong and focused leaders in Milwaukee. I also consider him to be an honest and caring friend. Regardless of the outcome of his case, I stand ready to support him in any way I can. Thank you for opportunity to express myself as you consider the case outcome for Vaun Mayes.

Judith A. Moore

5358A N. Lovers Lane Road Apt. 112

Milwaukee, WI

(414) - 412 - 5123

March 31, 2022

To whom it may concern,

I live in Moreno Valley, California. I came across Mr. Mayes via Facebook in 2020 during the George Floyd protests. Mr. Mayes has an ability to breakdown legal and political events into layman's terms and keep it engaging. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Mayes in person in June 2021. Mr. Mayes was truly kind and caring, a complete all-around good guy.

Vaun Mayes is the kind of man who exemplifies courage with a gentle heart and his work is only a portion of the testament to his character. He brings awareness to vital opportunities, citizen patrols, DV response, search parties and the list goes on. Mr. Mayes is the kind of man who puts his whole heart into the city he loves, the kind of man who understands the value of his words and the weight of his name, an asset to anyone he encounters; Mr. Mayes is an honorable man and is an indispensable part of his community.

Best Regard,

Angel DeShazer .

To: Whom it may concern From: Darrell Williams

Re: Character Letter of Support for Community Activist Vaun Mayes

Date: January 26, 2024

In the spirt of justice, I write this letter in support of Vaun Mayes. Mr. Mayes is a community activist whose ongoing efforts have resulted in decreased crime and increased problem solving among youth across Milwaukee. His positive footprint can be seen in many schools across Milwaukee as he speaks directly with youth and families to redirect the negative narrative into a more positive direction.

Mr. Mayes is a fearless advocate for children and families who services are often sought after as he has helped many families with difficulties challenges. I was most impressed with Mr. Mayes' leadership efforts to organize community stakeholders to find a missing young child that was highly publicized locally and and nationally.

Unfortunately, there are senseless acts of violence that occur across this community, especially in the inner city. Fortunately, with tremendous courage, genuine concern and in many cases, at great risk to his own life, Mr. Mayes responds and serves as a source of support to those impacted and a symbol of truth and proactive peace. Mr. Mayes is a 'true' Soldier in the fight for social justice and accountability. As well, Mr. Mayes is a well respected advocate who works closely and in collaboration with many violence and peace keeping organizations across Milwaukee. In that spirit, while many run from the ills of urban Milwaukee, Mr. Mayes uses his knowledge, skills, and expertise to diagnose, address and heal those issues in an effort to make Milwaukee a better place for everyone.

Over the past three years, I have had the honor of working with him on several efforts to help improve the city of Milwaukee and surrounding areas. I have been in the schools where Mr. Mayes has supported our youth through his presence and his voice. I have been at community events such as the back to school block party (e.g., 35th and Center) where he and others led efforts to give school supplies to thousands of needy kids and families. Most recently, I had the honor of attending a local school tour where we observed Career and Technical Education opportunities for children...and recognized the need to expand educational options to other middle and high schools.

The crux of the matter is the work that Mr. Mayes is doing in this community and his impact is making difference in our youth and the overall Milwaukee community. Mr. Mayes is a leader in this community. Across Milwaukee and Wisconsin, Mr. Mayes can be found and his voice can heard as a 'voice for the voiceless' and one of courage as he speaks for those who cannot or are fearful of speaking for themselves.

In essence, our community needs the type of positive leadership and impact that Mr. Mayes is making on a daily basis. Justice does not always have to be punitive. If all we ever use is a hammer then we will look at every issues as a nail. This must not be. We must balance legal with what is appropriate. In this case, the justice system should be used to rebuild, restore and reinvest in its citizens like Vaun Mayes, especially when they have already shown by their genuine action that they have atoned, reformed and reinvented themselves... just as Vaun Mayes has done in this community.

In this case, let us be just and not have a miscarriage of justice. Mr. Mayes is not a danger or deficit to society but an invaluable asset. Please waive any charges and allow Mr. Mayes to continue the making a difference in the community. I once heard someone say, "Just because you have the right to do something... doesn't mean it's the right thing to do!" Let us do the right thing in this case and allow him to continue making Milwaukee a better place through his continued work. This case provides a unique opportunity to ensure that the scales of balance 'truly' leans toward justice.

#### Sean Kafer

2022 N. Booth St. Milwaukee, WI 53212 (414) 213-3873 seankafer@gmail.com

13th October 2024

#### Chief Judge Pamela Pepper

United States Courthouse Room 208 517 East Wisconsin Avenue Milwaukee, WI 53202

### Dear Judge Pepper,

I am the Director of docUWM, the documentary media center at UW-Milwaukee in the Department of Film, Video, Animation and New Genres. I spend a lot of my time in all different parts of the city, working with and around community leaders with different goals and dedications. After witnessing Van's (Vaun) service for his community I brought myself to him to learn more about his efforts. Rarely have I met a more selfless, empathetic human both in the greater Milwaukee community and outside.

Some of my early experiences with Mayes was watching him personally deliver food and care aid to those during the 2020 Covid outbreak. He found homes for those affected and homeless. He'd work in the freezing cold and into early hours in the morning as a true servant leader for people in need.

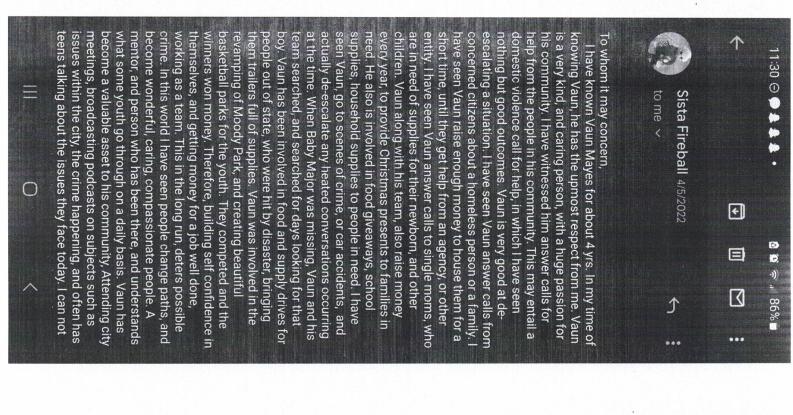
Perhaps the most time I've spent with Van is witnessing his deduction to youth. When Mayes noticed violence and poor conduct occurring in some of the public parks through the city he leant a hand in finding healthier solutions for youth in trouble. I've been around Mayes talking through arguments and avoiding conflict. I've been with him as he takes young people fishing, holding neighborhood cleanups, hosting Christmas giveaways in low income neighborhoods and more.

As someone who has followed this case closely it's clear that Van Mayes has become a scapegoat to make sense of the confusion of what happened in the Sherman Park neighborhood in 2016. I believe that Van Mayes's conduct and character are exemplary and has has only contributed in a positive way to the greater community.

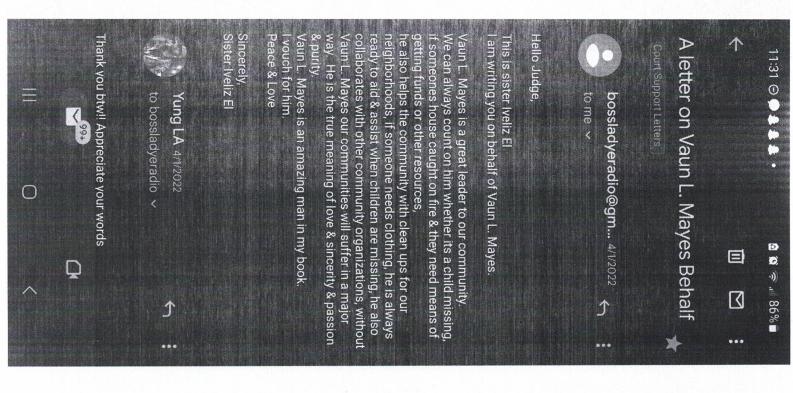
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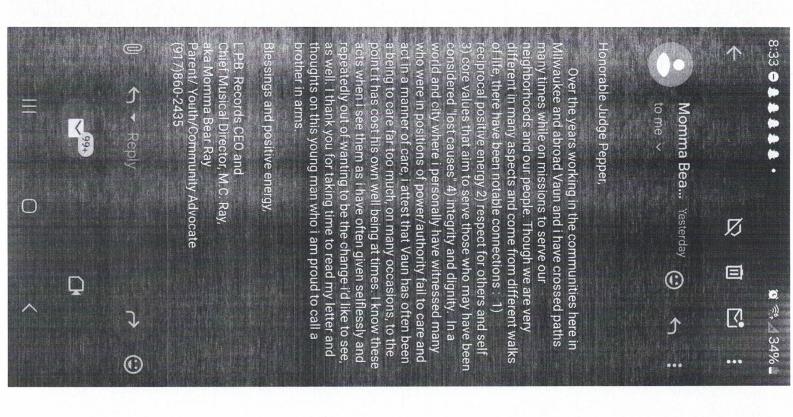
## Sean Kafer

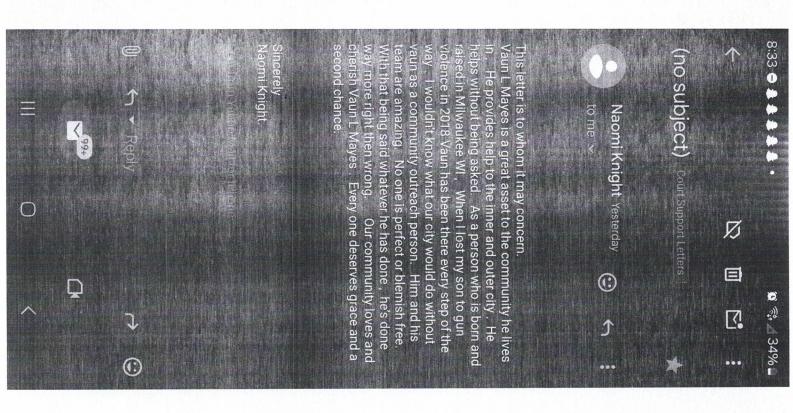


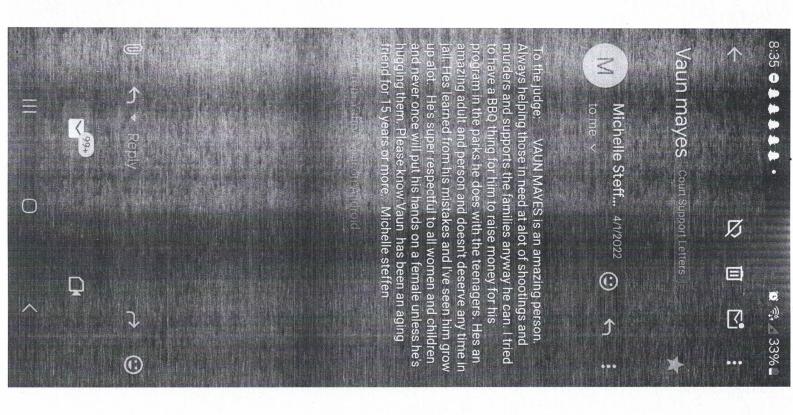


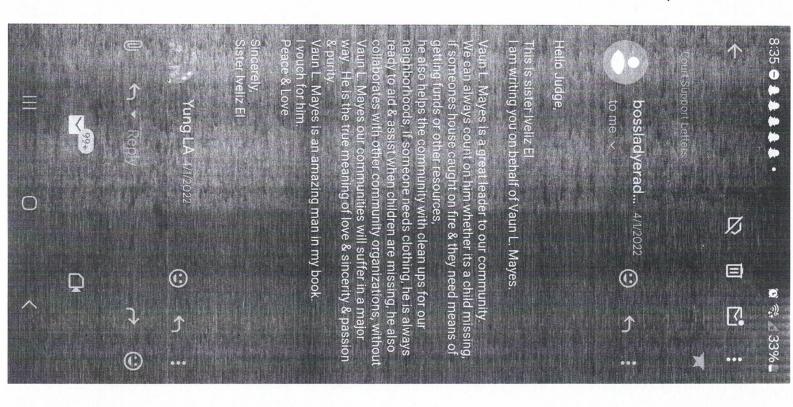


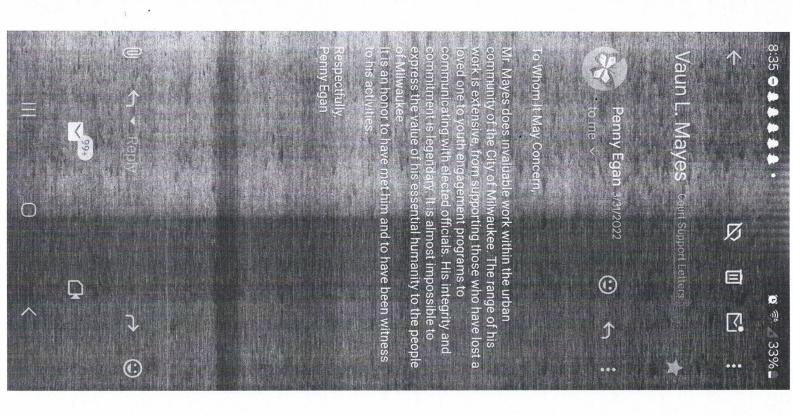












April 4, 2022

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Tracy Smith and I am writing this on behalf of Van L. Mayes. Van is a pillar of the Milwaukee community. Van's selflessness and acts to unite the community are far too long to list as when you see community work, you see Van. Growing up on Milwaukee's northside, I understand some of the struggles in Milwaukee. Resources created by the government may exist however when you need to utilize them, they are unavailable. Van makes the impossible, possible. When others in the community fail to respond or act, Van will; when people are in need, Van finds solutions; when someone loses a loved one, Van shows up to support and offer guidance; when people are facing domestic situations, Van is there to defuse them, and the list goes on. I have had the pleasure of getting to know Van the last several years and see countless hours he puts in to help the community and make the community better. There have been many opportunities that Van could have quit or turned a blind eye to injustices that were occurring in Milwaukee communities, however every time he chooses to help. How many of us can say we do the same?

In my interactions with Van, it is evident that not only does the community respects him as a leader but so do the youth. As many of us know, to reach and connect with the youth of today is critical in determining the future of tomorrow. Van has a good rapport with the youth and has been a change agent for many of them. Van spends countless hours supporting our community with little to no recognition. Van has the best interest of the community in mind and helps to make Milwaukee a better and safer place to live. I have known Van to be a transparent, honest, and trustworthy man. When asked for guidance, direction, advice or involvement, Van steer people using a sound ethical and moral compass that promotes the goodness of humankind. It takes a special person to provide community service for over 10 years and Van is one of those individuals.

Tracy Smith

N90W17244 St. Thomas Drive Menomonee Falls WI 53051

Traydittyt@gmail.com

Attention: Judge in Charge of Vaun Mayes Case

I am writing you to indicate my support of Vaun Mayes. While I do not personally know Mr. Mayes, I have been following his work in the City of Milwaukee for several years now. I would like to describe why he deserves my support and yours.

- 1. He never asks for anything personally for his work in supporting any person in need in the community.
- 2. He has shown by his actions <u>every day</u> that he helps people in need. This is one of the main reasons I follow and support him. I watched as Vaun brought attention to desperate situations in Milwaukee. A homeless woman in desperate need in the mid-summer heat, no food to eat, no place to get respite from dangerously hot temperatures. Vaun stopped what he was doing and advised us of this situation to those of us following him. He did not leave until she was safe. A woman in a domestic situation, Vaun regularly stands by the abused woman, ready to drive them to a place of safety. A young man stranded on the freeway, needed money for gas, Vaun reached out to his supporters for their help. A young child abandoned late at night, Vaun collaborated with the police that arrived to try and find any solution that would keep the child out of the system and be reunited with her family.
- Vaun regularly appears on any scene that may need mediation with members of the community and the
  police. Vaun is a calm presence and can facilitate in a situation when needed. Or stand back and
  document events.
- 4. Vaun also has a unique way of educating people about current situations, like voting rights and explaining how political machinations work. He often identifies the needs in our community and practical solutions to these conditions. These "educational" messages are oftentimes delivered in a humorous way, but when seriousness is dictated by events, he can convey that as well.

I do not live in Vaun's physical world. In fact, if I did not follow Vaun, I would be clueless as to the goings-on in our city. I am white, a woman, 66 years old, and I live in the north shore of Milwaukee. But, in my previous work as a teacher and now a substitute teacher in Milwaukee Public Schools, I teach and care for teenagers that do live in Vaun's world. All I think about now is how I wish I could put my kids, the students that suffer trauma, the teens that so desperately need love, in touch with a role model like Mr. Mayes.

Vaun is an agent of change. Vaun does what he does because he believes that our community can change for the better. I would proudly stand beside Vaun and support him in the effort to turn our city into a better place. I hope you can see how valued he is and drop the charges against him.

Sincerely,

Cindy Friese 500 W. Bradley Road Fox Point, WI 53217 FROM THE DESK OF

# WALTER J. LANIER

February 19, 2023

Re: Support of Vaun Mayes

To whom it may concern:

We write this letter in support of Vaun Mays in his upcoming federal court hearing. I wear several hats in the community, including the pastor of the Progressive Baptist Church, Chairman of the Milwaukee Health Services, Inc. federally qualified health center, and President and CEO of the African American Leadership Alliance Milwaukee. For many years, I have been blessed to observe, work with and invest in Vaun and his continuing labor to serve the community.

Vaun is a unique young man in his unwavering persistence to serve. those with some of the most significant needs in the community regardless of his circumstances, resources, and even his self-interest. Vaun is a treasured member of this community, having touched hundreds, if not thousands, of lives over the years.

I have passing familiarity with the facts alleged and the charges against him. Those facts seem very inconsistent with the young man that I have watched and observed; I have seen him de-escalate some of the highest levels of conflict in our city. That is in very sharp contrast to the facts alleged in his case. However, I also know that the moment was very tense and inflamed. Now and then, even the best of us can break character.

Thus, if it is determined – contrary to his character – that Vaun broke character at a very tense and volatile time, the court and the system should extend leniency based on his long and consistent record of significant service to his community. Lastly, although I submit this letter on my own behalf, I know many committed citizens and leaders in our community who highly respect and support Vaun.

Each of the men copied below also join this letter in support of Vaun and Derrick Rogers has also added his own letter of support (attached).

I'm available. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at 414.690.2520 or pastorlanier@gmail.com

In service,

Cc:

- 1. Elder Jim Addison
- 2. Mark Briggs
- 3. Equan Burrows
- 4. Kweku-TeAngelo Cargile Jr
- 5. Marques Hogans
- 6. Daryl Jackson
- 7. Rev. Greg Lewis
- 8. Jermaine Murry
- 9. Rev Derrick Rogers
- 10. Mike Taylor